This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A handheld personal assistant operated by a user comprising:

a categorizer configured to store a plurality of data items in a database organized by one or more categories of information;

a voice-recognizer configured to recognize the user's voice and transform an expression input by the user ~~from a person~~ into a different mode of information; ~~and~~

a context processor configured determine the category of information corresponding to the expression input by the user, based on one of a direct context specified by the user or an inferred context based on the expression input; and

a natural-language processor configured to process the mode of information to extract, from ~~a~~ the database, a piece of information that is personal to the ~~person~~ user, wherein upon recognition of the user's voice, the personal assistant only allows the user to access the piece of information that is personal to the user,

and further wherein the natural-language processor can still extract the piece of information when the ~~person~~ user declares the expression differently.

2. (Original) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim 1, wherein the processor analyzes the expression grammatically and semantically to transform at least a part of the expression into at least one instruction.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim 2,

wherein the processor can still extract the piece of information even if the expression is ambiguous~~, and~~

~~wherein the recognizer has been previously trained to recognize the person's voice, but not another person's voice~~.

5. (Currently Amended) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim ~~3~~2, wherein the piece of information is selected from a list consisting of a personal address book, a to-do-list and a calendar.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Original) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim 5, wherein said personal assistant further includes a display to display the piece of information.

8. (Original) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim 5, wherein said personal assistant further includes a voice synthesizer that transforms the piece of information into sound to communicate to the person.

9. (Currently amended) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim 5,

wherein the piece of information was entered into the assistant by the user, and

wherein the personal assistant further includes a ~~categorizer that stores the piece of information into the database~~ a formatting process that transforms the expression input by the user into a question with one or more phrases corresponding to the one or more categories of information, and a transformation process that converts the question into an instruction comprising a query to the database.

10. (Original) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim 9, wherein the piece of information was entered through voice.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Original) A handheld personal assistant as recited in claim 5, wherein if the assistant cannot resolve an ambiguity in the expression, the personal assistant provides the person with a number of alternatives to resolve the ambiguity.

13 - 25. (Cancelled)

26. (Currently Amended) A method for obtaining information for a requestor interacting with a handheld computing device, said method comprising:

storing a plurality of data items in a database organized by one or more categories of information;

receiving an input voice expression from the requestor;

recognizing the requestor's voice in order to retrieve information personal to the requestor and only for the requestor upon recognition of the requestor's voice;

converting the input voice expression into a text string;

processing the text string using grammatical and semantic processing to determine a natural language meaning for the text string; ~~and~~

~~performing an action based on the natural language meaning.~~

determining a category of information corresponding to the input by the requestor based on one of a direct context specified by the requestor or an inferred context based on the expression input; and

processing the natural language meaning for the text string to extract, from the database, a piece of information from the category of information.

27. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 26, ~~wherein said performing comprises:~~

~~retrieving information responsive to the natural language meaning of the text string.~~ further comprising the steps of:

transforming the input expression into a question format; and

converting the resulting question into an instruction comprising a query to the database.

28. (Original) A method as recited in claim 27, wherein said performing further comprises:

presenting the retrieved information to the requestor.

29. (Cancelled)